

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE AND REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON SCOPE OF EIS

Description of Proposal: Forest Land Plan for the South Puget Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) Planning Unit

This notice advises the public that the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WADNR) is developing a forest land plan which will produce a set of forest management strategies to address identified management issues in the South Puget HCP Planning Unit. These strategies, will be captured in the South Puget Forest Land Plan, and are intended to direct on-the-ground forest management activities to achieve implementation of the agency's policies including the sustainable harvest level for the planning unit. Consistent with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), the WADNR will complete a phased review. This first phase is a programmatic proposal, which assesses potential environmental impacts of strategies designed to achieve management objectives across the planning unit. In the future, individual site-specific activities (i.e. construction projects, timber sales, aerial spraying etc.) that implement the strategies may require additional review under SEPA.

Purpose:

The purpose of this proposed action is to develop strategies to provide direction from the Board of Natural Resources Policies, to support desired outcomes for measurable forest conditions- structure, composition and value, and qualitative forest conditions- and including social values at the planning unit scale.

The WADNR manages state forested trust lands according to a number of policies and directives, including Board of Natural Resources direction and formal resolutions, the Policy for Sustainable Forests (replaces the 1992 Forest Resource Plan), the 1997 Habitat Conservation Plan, and state and federal laws. Though the timber volume, trust revenue, habitat, and social outcomes desired under these policies may be achieved without the aid of planning, the ability to demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of cumulative management actions is improved with the aid of a formalized planning process.

Need:

- 1. The department must manage 141,000 acres of forested state trust lands in the South Puget Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) planning unit, and***
- 2. The department must implement new management direction for forested state trust lands directed by the Board of Natural Resources, including***
 - a. The management principles, new policies and sustainable harvest level associated with the Sustainable Forest Management direction adopted in September 2004, and***
 - b. The Policy for Sustainable Forests plan adopted in July 2006.***

There are increasing expectations for managers of forested state trust lands to balance varied public needs to support revenue production, wildlife habitat requirements, and other social-cultural and environmental values. With greater expectations comes the increasingly complex task of managing these lands. Planning the administrative details associated with land management, including the balancing of multiple resource sensitivities over a forested landscape and the timing and location of future activities and resource needs, is central to this proposal. In addition, the heterogeneous nature of the varied landscapes managed by WADNR reveals the need for customized implementation strategies when applying policy-level directional guidance at the local level.

The WADNR management paradigm has seen (and will see) fundamental changes with the advent of the Board's Sustainable Forest Management direction (Board of Natural Resources Resolution Nos. 1110 and 1134), and the Policy for Sustainable Forests (adopted in July 2006). In order to achieve the long-term goals of timber and revenue production, habitat creation, and the management of state forested trust lands for societal and environmental values in these management directives, WADNR must plan future management activities at a localized scale. These plans will demonstrate WADNR's ability to achieve its measurable objectives consistent with its stated values.

Describe the objective(s) of the proposal, including any secondary objectives, which may be used to shape or choose among alternatives.

In order for an alternative to be considered in the South Puget planning process, its strategies must meet the stated purpose and need (see pages 2 and 3). The following objectives for the South Puget forest land planning process will be used to evaluate potential alternatives:

1. Provide habitat conditions that support the objectives of the 1997 trust lands Habitat Conservation Plan.
 - a) Specific targets are to create and maintain 50 percent of the designated spotted owl management areas in nesting, roosting foraging and dispersal habitat and to develop older stand conditions with riparian management zones.
 - b) Create older forest conditions on forested state trust forest lands within the South Puget HCP planning unit. The target is to attain at least 10 percent of the forested state trust lands within the planning unit with niche diversification and fully functional forest stand development conditions¹ within the life of the trust lands Habitat Conservation Plan (1997-2067).
2. Generate trust revenue through the sale of the timber. The target for SP HCP planning unit is a sustainable harvest decade level of 561 million board feet of timber to generate approximately \$150 million.
3. Apply all Board of Natural Resources and DNR resolutions, policies and procedures using the key principles of the trust mandate, within current budgetary and administrative constraints, and according to state and federal law.

The South Puget forest land plan must additionally achieve the following secondary objectives, which are essential for the administration of the plan and the implementation of landscape strategies:

- Document alternative forest management strategies and their likely outcomes
- Specify the forest management strategies that will best achieve the stated objectives
- Provide adaptive management through feedback and communication that refine strategies and outcomes as appropriate
- Identify known and potential local social-cultural, economic and ecological issues that will need further analysis or assessment
- Address the logistical details of achieving desired outcomes in a given landscape, including timing, resources, and appropriate contingencies
- Foster communication and transparency concerning WADNR management activities

Possible Performance Criteria – those against which alternative landscape management strategies may be evaluated based on their efficiency and effectiveness at attaining the above stated objectives. Evaluation criteria may include:

- Net Present Value of forests over the long-term

¹ July 2004, Final EIS on Alternatives for Sustainable Forest Management of State Trust Lands in Western Washington

- Ability to achieve the desired future forest conditions. The target is to attain at least 10 percent of the forested state trust lands within the planning unit with niche diversification and fully functional forest stand development conditions² within the life of DNR's Habitat Conservation Plan (1997-2067).
- Cost and resources required to implement strategies
- Evaluation of environmental effects of strategies on natural resources
- Sustainable harvest volume flow and level consistent with 2006 Policy for Sustainable Forests, Appendix A.

Proponent: Washington State Department of Natural Resources

Location of proposal: All state forested trust lands in the South Puget Habitat Conservation Planning (HCP) Unit. Counties include within this planning area are King, Thurston, Mason, Lewis, Kitsap and Pierce.

Lead agency: Washington State Department of Natural Resources

EIS Required: The Lead Agency recognizes the potential for this proposal to have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Therefore, consistent with RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c), an environmental impact statement (EIS) will be prepared to analyze the potentially adverse impacts of this proposal.

Many impacts have already been reviewed in the Alternatives for Sustainable Forest Management of State trust Lands in Western Washington (Final EIS, July, 2004) and the Policy for Sustainable Forests (June, 2006).

The lead agency has identified the following areas for discussion in the EIS:

- **Social & Cultural Benefits:** Public Use, Cultural Resources, and Visual Management
- **Forest Ecosystem Health & Productivity:** Area Regulation, Habitat Reserves, Transition lands (land designations) Potentially Unstable areas, Viewsheds, Cultural Resources, Riparian Areas
- **Economic Performance:** Forestry, Silviculture, General Land Management, Rights-of-Ways, Leases

Scoping Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on the scope of the EIS. You may comment on alternatives, mitigation measures, probable significant adverse impacts, and licenses or other approvals that may be required. The method and deadline for giving us your comments is: **August 11, 2006 at 5:00 PM**

Comments should be submitted to:

Washington Department of Natural Resources SEPA Center
 1111 Washington Street SE
 P.O. Box 47015
 Olympia, Washington 98504-7015
 Phone: (360) 902-2117
 Fax: (360) 902-1789
 Email: sepacenter@wadnr.gov

² July 2004, Final EIS on Alternatives for Sustainable Forest Management of State Trust Lands in Western Washington

Notice of Public Meetings:

Meeting date: July 25, 2006

Time: 6:00 PM-8:00 PM

Place: Nisqually Lodge
31609 State Rt. 706
Ashford, WA

Meeting date: July 26, 2006

Time: 6:00 PM- 8:00 PM

Place: Mary Theler Community Center
22871 NE State Rt. 3
Belfair, WA

Meeting date: July 27 2006

Time: 6:00 PM- 8:00 PM

Place: Kiwanis Club of Issaquah
105 Newport Way SW
Issaquah, WA


Responsible official: Victoria Christiansen

Position/Title: DNR Region Operations Manager

Phone: 360-902-1401

Address:

Washington State Department of Natural Resources
P.O. Box 47016
111 Washington St. SE
Olympia, Washington 98504-47016

Date: July 12, 2006 **Signature:** 

There is no agency SEPA appeal.